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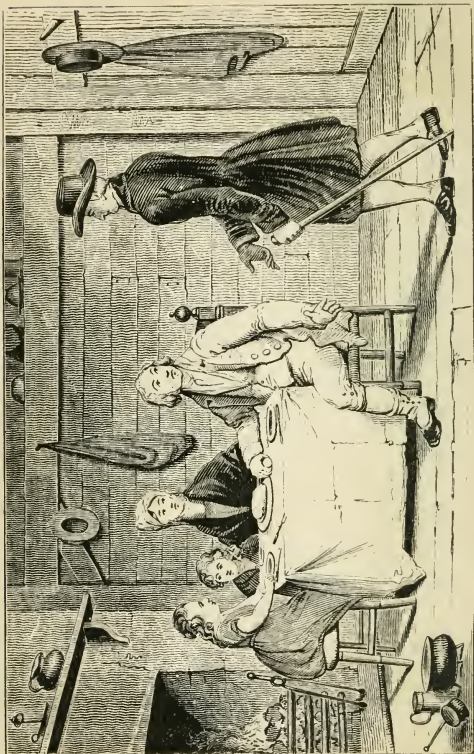


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Narratives

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Narrative



NARRATIVES
OF
THE SHEPHERD
OF
SALISBURY PLAIN;
THE
MOUNTAIN MILLER;
AND
GEORGE VINING.

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THE SHEPHERD

OF

SALISBURY PLAIN.

BY MRS. HANNAH MORE.

THE SHEPHERD

OF

SALISBURY PLAIN

Mr. Johnson, a very worthy, charitable gentleman, was traveling some time ago across one of those vast plains which are well known in Wiltshire. It was a fine summer's evening, and he rode slowly, that he might have leisure to admire God in the works of his creation. For this gentleman was of opinion that a walk or a ride was as proper a time as any to think about good things : for which reason, on such occasions, he seldom thought so much about his money, or his trade, or public news, as at other times, that he might with more ease and satisfaction enjoy the pious thoughts which the visible works of the great Maker of heaven and earth are intended to raise in the mind.

His attention was all of a sudden called off by the barking of a shepherd's dog, and looking up he spied one of those little huts which are here and there to be seen on those great downs; and near it was the Shepherd himself, busily employed with his dog in collecting together his vast flock of sheep. As he drew nearer, he perceived him to be a clean,

well-looking, poor man, near fifty years of age. His coat, though at first it had probably been of one dark color, had been in a long course of years so often patched with different sorts of cloth that it was now become hard to say which had been the original color. But this, while it gave plain proof of the Shepherd's poverty, equally proved the exceeding neatness, industry, and good management of his wife. His stockings no less proved her good housewifery, for they were entirely covered with darns of different colored worsted, but had not a hole in them; and his shirt, though nearly as coarse as the sails of a ship, was as white as the drifted snow, and was neatly mended where time had either made a rent or worn it thin. This furnishes a rule of judging, by which one will seldom be deceived. If I meet with a laborer hedging, ditching, or mending the high ways, with his stockings and shirt tight and whole, however mean and bad his other garments are, I have seldom failed, on visiting his cottage, to find that also clean and well-ordered, and his wife notable, and worthy of encouragement. Whereas a poor woman, who will be lying a-bed, or gossiping with her neighbors, when she ought to be fitting out her husband in a cleanly manner, will seldom be found to be very good in other respects.

This was not the case with our Shepherd; and Mr. Johnson was not more struck with the decency of his mean and frugal dress, than with his open,

honest countenance, which bore strong marks of health, cheerfulness, and spirit.

Mr. Johnson, who was on a journey, and somewhat fearful, from the appearance of the sky, that rain was at no great distance, accosted the Shepherd with asking what sort of weather he thought it would be on the morrow. "It will be such weather as pleases me," answered the Shepherd. Though the answer was delivered in the mildest and civilest tone that could be imagined, the gentleman thought the words themselves rather rude and surly, and asked him how that could be? "Because," replied the Shepherd, "it will be such weather as shall please God, and whatever pleases him always pleases me."

Mr. Johnson, who delighted in good men and good things, was very well satisfied with his reply; for he justly thought, that though a hypocrite may easily contrive to appear better than he really is to a stranger; and that no one should be too soon trusted, merely for having a few good words in his mouth; yet as he knew that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," he always accustomed himself to judge favorably of those who had a serious deportment and solid manner of speaking: it looks as if it proceeded from a good habit, said he, and though I may now and then be deceived by it, yet it has not often happened to me to be so. Whereas, if a man accosts me with an idle, dissolute, vulgar, indecent, or profane expression, I have never

been deceived in him, but have generally, on inquiry, found his character to be as bad as his language gave me room to expect.

He entered into conversation with the Shepherd in the following manner :

"Yours is a troublesome life, honest friend," said he.

"To be sure, Sir," replied the Shepherd, "'tis not a very lazy life ; but 'tis not near so toilsome as that which my great MASTER led for my sake ; and he had every state and condition of life at his choice, and chose a hard one ; while I only submit to the lot that is appointed me."

"You are exposed to great cold and heat," said the gentleman.

"True, Sir," said the Shepherd ; "but then I am not exposed to great temptations ; and so throwing one thing against another, God is pleased to contrive to make things more equal than we poor, ignorant, short-sighted creatures are apt to think. David was happier when he kept his father's sheep on such a plain as this, and was employed in singing some of his own Psalms, perhaps, than ever he was when he became king of Israel and Judah. And I dare say we should never have had some of the most beautiful texts in all those fine Psalms if he had not been a Shepherd, which enabled him to make so many fine comparisons and similitudes, as one may say, from country life, flocks of sheep, hills and valleys, and fountains of water."

"You think then," said the gentleman, "that a laborious life is a happy one."

"I do, Sir, and more so especially as it exposes a man to fewer sins. If king Saul had continued a poor laborious man to the end of his days, he might have lived happy and honest, and died a natural death in his bed at last, which you know, Sir, was more than he did. But I speak with reverence; for it was divine Providence overruled all that, you know, Sir, and I do not presume to make comparisons. Besides, Sir, my employment has been particularly honored. Moses was a shepherd in the plains of Midian. It was to 'shepherds, keeping their flocks by night,' that the angels appeared in Bethlehem to tell the best news, the gladdest tidings, that ever were revealed to poor, sinful men; often and often has the thought warmed my poor heart in the coldest nights, and filled me with more joy and thankfulness than the best supper could have done."

Here the Shepherd stopped, for he began to feel that he had made too free, and had talked too long. But Mr. Johnson was so well pleased with what he said, and with the cheerful, contented manner in which he said it, that he desired him to go on freely, for that it was a pleasure to him to meet with a plain man, who, without any kind of learning but what he had got from the Bible, was able to talk so well on a subject in which all men, high and low, rich and poor, are equally concerned.

"Indeed I am afraid I make too bold, Sir, for it better becomes me to listen to such a gentleman as you seem to be, than to talk in my poor way ; but, as I was saying, Sir, I wonder all working men do not derive as great joy and delight as I do, in thinking how God has honored poverty ! Oh ! Sir, what great, or rich, or mighty men have had such honor put on them or their condition, as shepherds, tent-makers, fishermen, and carpenters have had ?"

"My honest friend," said the gentleman, "I perceive you are well acquainted with Scripture."

"Yes, Sir, pretty well, blessed be God ! Through his mercy I learnt to read when I was a little boy ; though reading was not so common when I was a child, as I am told, through the goodness of Providence and the generosity of the rich, it is likely to become now-a-days. I believe there is no day, for the last thirty years, that I have not peeped at my Bible. If we can't find time to read a chapter, I defy any man to say he can't find time to read a verse ; and a single text, Sir, well followed and put in practice every day, would make no bad figure at the year's end ; three hundred and sixty-five texts, without the loss of a moment's time, would make a pretty stock, a little golden treasury, as one may say, from new year's day to new year's day ; and if children were brought up to it, they would come to look for their texts as naturally as they do for their breakfast. No laboring man,

'tis true, has so much leisure as a Shepherd; for while the flock is feeding I am obliged to be still, and at such times I can now and then tap a shoe for my children or myself, which is a great saving to us; and while I am doing that, I repeat a bit of a chapter, which makes the time pass pleasantly in this wild, solitary place. I can say the best part of the Bible by heart; I believe I should not say the best part, for every part is good, but I mean the greatest part. I have led but a lonely life, and have often had but little to eat; but my Bible has been meat, drink, and company to me, as I may say; and when want and trouble have come upon me, I don't know what I should have done indeed, Sir, if I had not had the promises of this book for my stay and support."

"You have had great difficulties then," said Mr. Johnson.

"Why, as to that, Sir, not more than neighbors' fare; I have but little cause to complain, and much to be thankful; but I have had some struggles, as I will leave you to judge. I have a wife and eight children, whom I bred up in that little cottage which you see under the hill about half a mile off."

"What, that with the smoke coming out of the chimney?" said the gentleman.

"O no, Sir," replied the Shepherd, smiling, "we have seldom smoke in the evening, for we have little to cook, and firing is very dear in these parts.

'Tis that cottage which you see on the left hand of the church, near that little tuft of hawthorns."

"What, that hovel with only one room above and below, with scarcely any chimney? How is it possible you can live there with such a family?"

"O! it is very possible and very certain too," cried the Shepherd. "How many better men have been worse lodged! How many good Christians have perished in prisons and dungeons, in comparison of which my cottage is a palace! The house is very well, Sir, and if the rain did not sometimes beat down upon us through the thatch when we are a-bed, I should not desire a better; for I have health, peace, and liberty, and no man maketh me afraid."

"Well, I will certainly call upon you before it be long; but how can you contrive to lodge so many children?"

"We do the best we can, Sir. My poor wife is a very sickly woman, or we should always have done tolerably well. There are no gentry in the parish, so that she has not met with any great assistance in her sickness. The good curate of the parish, who lives in that pretty parsonage in the valley, is very willing, but not very able to assist us on these trying occasions, for he has little enough for himself, and a large family into the bargain. Yet he does what he can, and more than many rich men do, and more than he can well afford. Besides

that, his prayers and good advice we are always sure of, and we are truly thankful for that ; for a man must give, you know, Sir, according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not."

"Are you in any distress at present?" said Mr Johnson.

"No, Sir, thank God," replied the Shepherd. "I get my shilling a day, and most of my children will soon be able to earn something ; for we have only three under five years old."

"Only!" said the gentleman ; "that is a heavy burden."

"Not at all ; God fits the back to it. Though my wife is not able to do any out of door work, yet she breeds up her children to such habits of industry, that our little maids, before they are six years old, can first get a half-penny, and then a penny a day, by knitting. The boys who are too little to do hard work, get a trifle by keeping the birds off the corn ; for this the farmers will give them a penny or two pence, and now and then a bit of bread and cheese into the bargain. When the season of crow-keeping is over, then they glean, or pick stones ; any thing is better than idleness, Sir ; and if they did not get a farthing by it, I would make them do it just the same, for the sake of giving them early habits of labor.

"So you see, Sir, I am not so badly off as many are ; nay, if it were not that it cost me so much in

'potecary's stuff for my poor wife, I should reckon myself well off: nay, I do reckon myself well off: for, blessed be God, he has granted her life to my prayers, and I would work myself to a 'natomy, and live on one meal a day, to add one comfort to her valuable life. Indeed I have often done the last, and thought it no great matter neither."

While they were in this part of the discourse, a fine, plump, cherry-cheek little girl ran up out of breath, with a smile on her young happy face, and without taking any notice of the gentleman, cried out with great joy, "Look here, father, only see how much I have got to-day!" Mr. Johnson was much struck with her simplicity, but puzzled to know what was the occasion of this great joy. On looking at her, he perceived a small quantity of coarse wool, some of which had found its way through the holes of her clean, but scanty and ragged, woollen apron. The father said, "This has been a successful day indeed, Molly; but don't you see the gentleman?" Molly now made a low courtesy down to the very ground; while Mr. Johnson inquired into the cause of the mutual satisfaction which both father and daughter had expressed at the unusual good fortune of the day.

"Sir," said the Shepherd, "poverty is a great sharpener of the wits. My wife and I cannot endure to see our children (poor as they are) without shoes and stockings, not only on account of the

pinching cold, which cramps their poor little limbs, but because it degrades and debases them; and poor people who have but little regard to appearance, will seldom be found to have any great regard to honesty and goodness: I don't say this is always the case; but I am sure it is so too often. Now shoes and stockings being very dear, we never could afford to get them without a little contrivance. I must show you how I manage about the shoes, when you condescend to call at our cottage, Sir: as to stockings, this is one way we take to help to get them. My young ones, who are too little to do much work, sometimes wander at odd hours over the hills for the chance of finding what little wool the sheep may drop when they rub themselves, as they are apt to do, against the bushes.* These scattered bits of wool the children pick up out of the brambles, which I see have torn sad holes in Molly's apron to-day; they carry this wool home, and when they have got a pretty parcel together, their mother cards it; for she can sit and card in the chimney-corner, when she is not able to wash or work about house. The biggest girl then spins it: it does very well for us without dyeing, for poor people must not stand for the color of their stockings. After this, our little boys knit

* This piece of frugal industry is not imaginary, but a real fact, as is the character of the Shepherd, and his uncommon knowledge of the Scriptures.

it for themselves, while they are employed in crow-keeping in the fields, and after they get home at night. As for the knitting the girls and their mother do, that is chiefly for sale, which helps to pay our rent."

Mr. Johnson lifted up his eyes in silent astonishment at the shifts which honest poverty can make, rather than beg or steal; and was surprised to think how many ways of subsisting there are, which those who live at their ease little suspect. He secretly resolved to be more attentive to his own petty expenses than he had hitherto been, and to be more watchful that nothing was wasted in his family.

But to return to the Shepherd. Mr. Johnson told him, that as he must needs be at his friend's house, who lived many miles off, that night, he could not, as he wished to do, make a visit to his cottage at present. "But I will certainly do it," said he, "on my return, for I long to see your wife and her nice little family, and to be an eye-witness of her neatness and good management."

The poor man's tears started into his eyes on hearing the commendation bestowed on his wife; and wiping them off with the sleeve of his coat, for he was not worth a handkerchief in the world, he said, "Oh, Sir, you just now, I am afraid, called me a humble man, but indeed I am a very proud one."

"Proud!" exclaimed Mr. Johnson, "I hope not;

pride is a great sin, and as the poor are liable to it as well as the rich, so good a man as you seem to be, ought to guard against it."

"Sir," said he, "you are right; but I am not proud of myself; God knows, I have nothing to be proud of—I am a poor sinner; but indeed, Sir, I am proud of my wife; she is not only the most tidy, notable woman on the plain, but she is the kindest wife and mother, and the most contented, thankful Christian that I know. Last year I thought I should have lost her in a violent fit of the rheumatism, caught by going to work too soon after her lying in, I fear; for 'tis but a bleak, coldish place, as you may see, Sir, in winter; and sometimes the snow lies so long under the hill, that I can hardly make myself a path to get out and buy a few necessaries in the next village; and we are afraid to send out the children, for fear they would be lost when the snow is deep. So, as I was saying, the poor soul was very bad indeed, and for several weeks lost the use of all her limbs except her hands; a merciful Providence spared her the use of these, so that when she could not turn in her bed, she could contrive to patch a rag or two for her family. She was always saying, had it not been for the great goodness of God, she might have had her hands lame as well as her feet, or the palsy instead of the rheumatism, and then she could have done nothing—but nobody had so many mercies as she had.

"I will not tell you what we suffered during the bitter weather, Sir ; but my wife's faith and patience during that trying time were as good a lesson to me as any sermon I could hear ; and yet Mr. Jenkins gave us very comfortable ones too, that helped to keep up my spirits.

"One Sunday afternoon, when my wife was at the worst, as I was coming out of church, (for I went one part of the day, and my eldest daughter the other, so my poor wife was never left alone ;) as I was coming out of church, I say, Mr. Jenkins the minister called out to me, and asked me how my wife did, saying he had been kept from coming to see her by the deep fall of snow ; and indeed from the parsonage house to my hovel it was quite impassable. I gave him all the particulars he asked, and I am afraid a good many more, for my heart was quite full. He kindly gave me a shilling, and said he would certainly try to pick out his way, and come and see her in a day or two.

"While he was talking to me, a plain, farmer-looking gentleman, in boots, who stood by, listened to all I said, but seemed to take no notice. It was Mr. Jenkins' wife's father, who was come to pass the Christmas holidays at the parsonage house. I had always heard him spoken of as a plain, frugal man, who lived close himself, but was remarked to give away more than any of his show-away neighbors.

“Well; I went home with great spirits at this seasonable and unexpected supply; for we had tapped our last sixpence, and there was little work to be had, on account of the weather. I told my wife I had not come back empty-handed. No, I dare say not, says she, you have been serving a Master ‘who filleth the hungry with good things, though he sendeth the rich empty away.’ True, Mary, said I, we seldom fail to get good spiritual food from Mr. Jenkins, but to-day he has kindly supplied our bodily wants. She was more thankful, when I showed her the shilling, than I dare say some of you great people are when they get a hundred pounds.”

Mr. Johnson’s heart smote him when he heard such a value set upon a shilling; surely, said he to himself, I will never waste another; but he said nothing to the Shepherd, who thus pursued his story.

“Next morning, before I went out, I sent part of the money to buy a little ale and brown sugar to put into her water-gruel; which you know, Sir, made it nice and nourishing. I went out to cleave wood in a farm-yard, for there was no standing out on the plain, after such a snow as had fallen in the night. I went with a lighter heart than usual, because I had left my poor wife a little better, and comfortably supplied for this day, and I now resolved more than ever to trust God for the supplies

of the next. When I came back at night, my wife fell a crying as soon as she saw me. This, I own, I thought but a bad return for the blessings she had so lately received, and so I told her. O, said she, it is too much, we are too rich ; I am now frightened, not lest we should have no portion in this world, but for fear we should have our whole portion in it. Look here, John ! So saying, she uncovered the bed whereon she lay, and showed me two warm, thick, new blankets. I could not believe my own eyes, Sir, because, when I went out in the morning, I had left her with no other covering than our little old blue rug. I was still more amazed when she put half a crown into my hand, telling me she had had a visit from Mr. Jenkins and Mr. Jones, the latter of whom had bestowed all these good things upon us. Thus, Sir, have our lives been crowned with mercies. My wife got about again, and I do believe, under Providence, it was owing to these comforts ; for the rheumatism, Sir, without blankets by night and flannel by day, is but a baddish job, especially to people who have but little or no fire. She will always be a weakly body ; but thank God, her soul prospers, and is in health. But I beg your pardon, Sir, for talking on at this rate."

"Not at all, not at all," said Mr. Johnson ; "I am much pleased with your story ; you shall certainly see me in a few days. Good night."

So saying, he slipped a crown into his hand and

rode off. Surely, said the Shepherd, "*goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life,*" as he gave the money to his wife when he got home at night.

As to Mr. Johnson, he found abundant matter for his thoughts during the rest of his journey. On the whole he was more disposed to envy than to pity the Shepherd. I have seldom seen, said he, so happy a man. It is a sort of happiness which the world could not give, and which, I plainly see, it has not been able to take away. This must be the true spirit of religion. I see more and more, that true goodness is not merely a thing of words and opinions, but a living principle brought into every common action of a man's life. What else could have supported this poor couple under every bitter trial of want and sickness? No, my honest Shepherd, I do not pity, but I respect and even honor thee; and I will visit thy poor hovel on my return to Salisbury, with as much pleasure as I am now going to the house of my friend.

If Mr. Johnson keeps his word in sending me the account of his visit to the Shepherd's cottage, I shall be very glad to entertain my readers with it.

PART II.

I am willing to hope that my readers will not be sorry to hear some farther particulars of their old

acquaintance, *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*. They will call to mind, that at the end of the first part he was returning home, full of gratitude for the favors he had received from Mr. Johnson, whom we left pursuing his journey, after having promised to make a visit to the Shepherd's cottage.

Mr. Johnson, after having passed some time with his friend, set out on his return to Salisbury, and on the Saturday evening reached a very small inn, a mile or two distant from the Shepherd's village; for he never traveled on a Sunday. He went next morning to the church nearest the house where he had passed the night; and after taking such refreshment as he could get at that house, he walked on to find out the Shepherd's cottage. His reason for visiting him on Sunday was chiefly because he supposed it to be the only day which the Shepherd's employment allowed him to pass at home with his family; and as Mr. Johnson had been struck with his talk, he thought it would be neither unpleasant nor unprofitable to observe how a man, who carried such an appearance of piety, spent his Sunday; for, though he was so low in the world, this gentleman was not above entering very closely into his character, of which he thought he should be able to form a better judgment, by seeing whether his practice at home kept pace with his profession abroad. For it is not so much by observing how people talk, as

how they live, that we ought to judge of their characters.

After a pleasant walk, Mr. Johnson got within sight of the cottage, to which he was directed by the clump of hawthorns and the broken chimney. He wished to take the family by surprise; and walking gently up to the house, he stood a while to listen. The door being half open, he saw the Shepherd, (who looked so respectable in his Sunday coat that he should hardly have known him,) his wife and their numerous family drawing round their little table, which was covered with a clean, though very coarse cloth. There stood on it a large dish of potatoes, a brown pitcher, and a piece of coarse loaf. The wife and children stood in silent attention, while the Shepherd, with uplifted hands and eyes, devoutly begged the blessing of Heaven on their homely fare. Mr. Johnson could not help sighing to reflect that he had sometimes seen better dinners eaten with less appearance of thankfulness.

The Shepherd and his wife then sat down with great seeming cheerfulness, but the children stood; and while the mother was helping them, little fresh-colored Molly, who had picked the wool from the bushes with so much delight, cried out, .

"Father, I wish I was big enough to say grace, I am sure I should say it very heartily to-day; for I was thinking what must *poor* people do, who have

no salt to their potatoes; and do but look, our dish is quite full."

"That is the true way of thinking, Molly," said the father; "in whatever concerns bodily wants and bodily comforts, it is our duty to compare our own lot with the lot of those who are worse off, and this will keep us thankful. On the other hand, whenever we are tempted to set up our own wisdom or goodness, we must compare ourselves with those who are wiser and better, and that will keep us humble."

Molly was now so hungry, and found the potatoes so good, that she had no time to make any more remarks; but was devouring her dinner very heartily, when the barking of the great dog drew her attention from her trencher to the door, and spying the stranger, she cried out, "Look, father, see here, is not that the good gentleman?"

Mr. Johnson, finding himself discovered, immediately walked in, and was heartily welcomed by the honest Shepherd, who told his wife that this was the gentleman to whom they were so much obliged.

The good woman began, as some very neat people are rather too apt to do, with making many apologies, that her house was not cleaner, and that things were not in fitter order to receive such a gentleman. Mr. Johnson, however, on looking round, could discover nothing but the most perfect

neatness. The trenchers on which they were eating were almost as white as their linen ; and, notwithstanding the number and smallness of the children, there was not the least appearance of dirt or litter. The furniture was very simple and poor, hardly indeed amounting to bare necessities. It consisted of four brown wooden chairs, which, by constant rubbing, were become as bright as a looking-glass ; an iron pot and kettle ; a poor old grate, which scarcely held a handful of coal, and out of which the little fire that had been in it appeared to have been taken as soon as it had answered the end for which it had been lighted, that of boiling their potatoes. Over the chimney stood an old-fashioned broad bright candlestick, and a still brighter spit ; it was pretty clear that this last was kept rather for ornament than use. An old carved elbow-chair, and a chest of the same date, which stood in the corner, were considered as the most valuable part of the Shepherd's goods, having been in his family for three generations. But all these were lightly esteemed by him, in comparison of another possession, which, added to the above, made up the whole of what he had inherited from his father ; and which last he would not have parted with, if no other could have been had, for a king's ransom ; this was a large old Bible, which lay on the window-seat, neatly covered with brown cloth, variously patched. This sacred book was most reverently pre-

served from dog's ears, dirt, and every other injury, but such as time and much use had made it suffer in spite of care. On the clean white walls were pasted a Hymn on the Crucifixion of our Savior, a print of the Prodigal Son, the Shepherd's Hymn, a New History of a true Book, and Patient Joe.

After the first salutations were over, Mr. Johnson said that if they would go on quietly with their dinner he would sit down. Though a good deal ashamed, they thought it more respectful to obey the gentleman, who, having cast his eye on their slender provisions, gently rebuked the Shepherd for not having indulged himself, as it was Sunday, with a morsel of bacon to relish his potatoes. The Shepherd said nothing, but poor Mary colored and hung down her head, saying, "Indeed, Sir, it is not my fault, I did beg my husband to allow himself a bit of meat to-day out of your honor's bounty; but he was too good to do it, and it is all for my sake."

The Shepherd seemed unwilling to come to an explanation, but Mr. Johnson desired Mary to go on. So she continued,

"You must know, Sir, that both of us, next to a sin, dread a debt; and indeed in some cases a debt is a sin; but with all our care and pains we have never been able quite to pay off the doctor's bill for that bad fit of rheumatism which I had last winter. Now, when you were pleased to give my husband that kind present the other day, I heartily desired

him to buy a bit of meat for Sunday, as I said before, that he might have a little refreshment out of your kindness. But he answered, 'Mary, it is never out of my mind long together, that we still owe a few shillings to the doctor (and, thank God, it was all we did owe in the world.) Now if I carry him this money directly, it will not only show him our honesty and our good will, but it will be an encouragement to him to come to you another time, in case you should be taken once more in such a bad fit; for I must own,' added my poor husband, 'that the thought of your being so terribly ill, without any help, is the only misfortune that I want courage to face.' "

Here the grateful woman's tears ran down so fast that she could not go on. She wiped them with the corner of her apron, and humbly begged pardon for making so free.

"Indeed, Sir," said the Shepherd, "though my wife is full as unwilling to be in debt as myself, yet I could hardly prevail on her to consent to my paying this money just then, because, she said, it was hard I should not have a taste of the gentleman's bounty myself. But for once, Sir, I would have my own way. For you must know, as I pass the best part of my time alone, tending my sheep, 'tis a great point with me, Sir, to get comfortable matter for my own thoughts; so that 'tis rather self-interest in me, to allow myself no pleasures and no practices that won't bear thinking on over and over. For

when one is a good deal alone, you know, Sir, all one's bad deeds do so rush in upon one, as I may say, and so torment one, that there is no true comfort to be had but in keeping clear of wrong doings and false pleasures ; and that I suppose may be one reason why so many folks hate to stay a bit by themselves. But, as I was saying, when I came to think the matter over on the hill yonder, said I to myself, a good dinner is a good thing, I grant, and yet it will be but cold comfort to me a week after, to be able to say—to be sure I had a nice shoulder of mutton last Sunday for dinner, thanks to the good gentleman, but then I am in debt—I *had* a rare dinner, that's certain, but the pleasure of that has long been over, and the debt still remains—I have spent the crown, and now if my poor wife should be taken in one of those fits again, die she must, unless God work a miracle to prevent it, for I can get no help for her. This thought settled all ; and I set off directly and paid the crown to the doctor with as much cheerfulness as I could have felt on sitting down to the fattest shoulder of mutton that was ever roasted. And if I was contented at the time, think how much more happy I have been at the remembrance ! O Sir, there are no pleasures worth the name, but such as bring no plague or penitence after them."

Mr. Johnson was satisfied with the Shepherd's reasons ; and agreed, that though a good dinner

was not to be despised, yet it was not worthy to be compared with a *contented mind*, which (as the proverb truly says) *is a continual feast*.

"But come," said the good gentleman, "what have we got in this brown mug?"

"As good water," said the Shepherd, "as any in the king's dominions. I have heard of countries beyond sea, in which there is no wholesome water; nay, I have been myself in a great town not far off, where they are obliged to buy all the water they get, while a good Providence sends to my very door a spring as clear and fine as Jacob's well. When I am tempted to repine that I have often no other drink, I call to mind that it was nothing better than a cup of cold water which the woman of Samaria drew for the greatest guest that ever visited this world."

"Very well," replied Mr. Johnson; "but as your honesty has made you prefer a poor meal to being in debt, I will at least send and get something for you to drink. I saw a little public house just by the church, as I came along. Let that little rosy-faced fellow fetch a mug of beer."

So saying he looked full at the boy, who did not offer to stir; but cast an eye at his father, to know what he was to do.

"Sir," said the Shepherd, "I hope we shall not appear ungrateful, if we seem to refuse your favor; my little boy would, I am sure, fly to serve you on

any other occasion. But, good Sir, it is Sunday, and should any of my family be seen at a public house on a Sabbath day, it would be a much greater grief to me than to drink water all my life. I am often talking against these doings to others! and if I should say one thing and do another, you can't think what an advantage it would give many of my neighbors over me, who would be glad enough to report that they caught the Shepherd's son at the ale-house, without explaining how it happened. Christians, you know, Sir, must be doubly watchful, or they will not only bring disgrace on themselves, but, what is much worse, on that holy name by which they are called."

"Are you not a little too cautious, my honest friend?" said Mr. Johnson.

"I humbly ask your pardon, Sir," replied the Shepherd, "if I think that impossible. In my poor notion, I no more understand how a man can be too cautious, than how he can be too strong, or too healthy."

"You are right, indeed," said Mr. Johnson, "as a general principle, but this struck me as a very small thing."

"Sir," said the Shepherd, "I am afraid you will think me very bold, but you encourage me to speak out."

"'Tis what I wish," said the gentleman.

"Then, Sir," resumed the Shepherd, "I doubt if

where there is a temptation to do wrong, any thing can be called small; that is, in short, if there is any such thing as a small willful sin. A poor man, like me, is seldom called out to do great things; so that it is not by a few striking deeds his character can be judged by his neighbors, but by the little round of daily customs he allows himself in."

While they were thus talking, the children, who had stood very quietly behind, and had not stirred a foot, now began to scamper about all at once, and in a moment ran to the window-seat to pick up their little old hats. Mr. Johnson looked surprised at this disturbance; the Shepherd asked his pardon, telling him it was the sound of the church bell which had been the cause of their rudeness; for their mother had brought them up with such a fear of being too late for church, that it was but who could catch the first stroke of the bell and be first ready. He had always taught them to think that nothing was more indecent than to get into church after it was begun; for as the service opened with an exhortation to repentance and a confession of sin, it looked very presumptuous not to be ready to join in it; it looked as if people did not feel themselves to be sinners. And though such as lived at a great distance might plead difference of clocks as an excuse, yet those who lived within the sound of the bell could pretend neither ignorance nor mistake.

Mary and her children set forward. Mr. Johnson and the Shepherd followed, taking care to talk the whole way on such subjects as might fit them for the solemn duties of the place to which they were going.

"I have often been sorry to observe," said Mr. Johnson, "that many, who are reckoned decent, good kind of people, and who would on no account neglect going to church, yet seem to care but little in what frame or temper of mind they go thither. They will talk of their worldly concerns till they get within the door, and then take them up again the very minute the sermon is over, which makes me ready to fear they lay too much stress on the mere form of going to a place of worship. Now, for my part, I always find that it requires a little time to bring my mind into a state fit to do any *common* business well, much more this great and most necessary business of all."

"Yes, Sir," said the Shepherd, "and then I think, too, how busy I should be in preparing my mind, if I was going into the presence of a great gentleman, or a lord, or a king; and shall the King of kings be treated with less respect? Besides, one likes to see people feel as if going to church was a thing of choice and pleasure, as well as a duty, and that they were as desirous not to be the last there, as they would be if they were going to a feast or a fair."

After service, Mr. Jenkins, the clergyman, who was well acquainted with the character of Mr. Johnson, and had a great respect for him, accosted him with much civility, expressing his concern that he could not enjoy just now so much of his conversation as he wished, as he was obliged to visit a sick person at a distance, but hoped to have a little talk with him before he left the village. As they walked along together, Mr. Johnson made such inquiries about the Shepherd as served to confirm him in the high opinion he entertained of his piety, good sense, industry, and self-denial. They parted, the clergyman promising to call in at the cottage on his way home.

The Shepherd, who took it for granted that Mr. Johnson was gone to the parsonage, walked home with his wife and children, and was beginning in his usual way to catechise and instruct his family, when Mr. Johnson came in, and insisted that the Shepherd should go on with his instructions just as if he were not there.

This gentleman, who was very desirous of being useful to his own servants and workmen in the way of religious instruction, was sometimes sorry to find, that though he took a good deal of pains, they did not now and then quite understand him ; for though his meaning was very good, his language was not always very plain ; and though the *things* he said were not hard to be understood, yet the *words*

were, especially to such as were very ignorant. And he now began to find out, that if people were ever so wise and good, yet if they had not a simple, agreeable, and familiar way of expressing themselves, some of their plain hearers would not be much the better for them. For this reason he was not above listening to the plain, humble way, in which this honest man taught his family; for though he knew that he himself had many advantages over the Shepherd, had more learning, and could teach him many things; yet he was not too proud to learn, even of so poor a man, in any point where he thought the Shepherd might have the advantage of him.

He was much pleased with the knowledge and piety he discovered in the answers of the children; and desired the Shepherd to tell him how he contrived to keep up a sense of divine things in his own mind and in that of his family, with so little leisure and so little reading.

"O, as to that, Sir," said the Shepherd, "we do not read much except in one book, to be sure, but by hearty prayer for God's blessing on the use of that book, what little knowledge is needful seems to come of course, as it were; and my chief study has been to bring the fruits of the Sunday reading into the week's business, and to keep up the same sense of God in the heart, when the Bible is in the cupboard, as when it is in the hand; in short, to

apply what I read in the book to what I meet with in the field."

"I don't quite understand you," said Mr. Johnson.

"Sir," replied the Shepherd, "I have but a poor gift at conveying these things to others, though I have much comfort from them in my own mind; but I am sure that the most ignorant and hard-working people, who are in earnest about their salvation, may help to keep up devout thoughts and good affections during the week, though they have hardly any time to look at a book. And it will help them to keep out bad thoughts, too, which is no small matter. But then they must know the Bible; they must have read the word of God: that is a kind of stock in trade for a Christian to set up with; and it is this which makes me so diligent in teaching it to my children, and even in storing their memories with psalms and chapters. This is a great help to a poor hard-working man, who will scarcely meet with any thing but what he may turn to some good account. If one lives in the fear and love of God, almost every thing one sees abroad will teach one to adore his power and goodness, and bring to mind some text of Scripture which shall fill the heart with thankfulness and the mouth with praise. When I look upwards, *the heavens declare the glory of God*; and shall I be silent and ungrateful? If I look round and see the valleys standing thick with corn, how can I help blessing

that Power *who giveth me all things richly to enjoy?* I may learn gratitude from the beasts of the field, for the *ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib*; and shall a Christian not know, shall a Christian not consider what great things God has done for him? I, who am a Shepherd, endeavor to fill my soul with a constant remembrance of that good Shepherd, who *feedeth me in green pastures, and maketh me to lie down beside the still waters, and whose rod and staff comfort me.*"

"You are happy," said Mr. Johnson, "in this retired life, by which you escape the corruptions of the world."

"Sir," said the Shepherd, "I do not escape the corruptions of my own evil nature. Even there, on that wild solitary hill, I can find out that my heart is prone to evil thoughts. I suppose, Sir, that different states have different temptations. You great folks that live in the world, perhaps, are exposed to some, of which such a poor man as I am knows nothing. But to one who leads a lonely life like me, evil thoughts are a chief besetting sin; and I can no more withstand these without the grace of God, than a rich gentleman can withstand the snares of evil company without the same grace. And I feel that I stand in need of God's help continually, and if he should give me up to my own evil heart, I should be lost."

Mr. Johnson approved of the Shepherd's sincer

ity, for he had always observed, that where there was no humility, and no watchfulness against sin, there was no religion; and he said, that the man who did not feel himself to be a sinner, in his opinion could not be a Christian.

Just as they were in this part of their discourse, Mr. Jenkins, the clergyman, came in. After the usual salutations, he said, "Well, Shepherd, I wish you joy: I know you will be sorry to gain any advantage by the death of a neighbor; but old Wilson, my clerk, was so infirm, and, I trust, so well prepared, that there is no reason to be sorry for his death. I have been to pray by him, but he died while I staid. I have always intended you should succeed to his place; 'tis no great matter of profit, but every little is something."

"No great matter! Sir," cried the Shepherd; "indeed it is a great matter to me; 'twill more than pay my rent. Blessed be God for all his goodness." Mary said nothing, but lifted up her eyes, full of tears, in silent gratitude.

"I am glad of this little circumstance," said Mr. Jenkins, "not only for your sake, but for the sake of the office itself. I so heartily reverence every religious institution, that I would never have even the *Amen* added to the excellent prayers of our church by vain or profane lips; and, if it depended on me, there should be no such thing in the land as an idle, drunken, or irreligious parish clerk.

Sorry I am to say that this matter is not always sufficiently attended to, and that I know some of a very different character."

Mr. Johnson now inquired of the clergyman whether there were many children in the parish.

"More than you would expect," replied he, "from the seeming smallness of it; but there are some little hamlets which you do not see."

"I think," returned Mr. Johnson, "I recollect that in the conversation I had with the Shepherd on the hill yonder, he told me you had no Sunday-school."

"I am sorry to say we have none," said the minister; "I do what I can to remedy this misfortune by public catechising; but having two or three churches to serve, I cannot give so much time as I wish to private instruction; and having a large family of my own, and no assistance from others, I have never been able to establish a school."

"There is an excellent institution in London," said Mr. Johnson, "called the Sunday-School Society, which kindly gives books and other helps, on the application of such pious ministers as stand in need of their aid, and which, I am sure, would have assisted you; but, I think, we shall be able to do something ourselves. Shepherd," continued he, "if I were a king, and had it in my power to make you a rich and a great man, with a word speaking, I would not do it. Those who are raised by some

sudden stroke, much above the station in which divine Providence had placed them, seldom turn out good or very happy. I have never had any great things in my power, but, as far as I have been able, I have always been glad to assist the worthy; I have, however, never attempted or desired to set any poor man much above his natural condition; but it is a pleasure to me to lend him such assistance as may make that condition more easy to himself, and to put him in a way which shall call him to the performance of more duties than perhaps he could have performed without my help, and of performing them in a better manner. What rent do you pay for this cottage?"

"Fifty shillings a year, Sir."

"It is in a sad, tattered condition: is there not a better to be had in the village?"

"That in which the poor clerk lived," said the clergyman, "is not only more tight and whole, but has two decent chambers, and a very large, light kitchen."

"That will be very convenient," replied Mr. Johnson; "pray what is the rent?"

"I think," said the Shepherd, "poor neighbor Wilson gave somewhere about four pounds a year, or it might be guineas."

"Very well," said Mr. Johnson, "and what will the clerk's place be worth, think you?"

"About three pounds," was the answer.

- "Now," continued Mr. Johnson, "my plan is, that the Shepherd should take that house immediately for as the poor man is dead, there will be no need of waiting till quarter day, if I make up the difference."

"True, Sir," said Mr. Jenkins, "and I am sure my wife's father, whom I expect to-morrow, will willingly assist a little towards buying some of the clerk's old goods. And the sooner they remove, the better, for poor Mary caught that bad rheumatism by sleeping under a leaky thatch."

The Shepherd was too much moved to speak, and Mary could hardly sob out, "O, Sir, you are too good; indeed this house will do very well."

"It may do very well for you and your poor children, Mary," said Mr. Johnson, gravely, "but it will not do for a school; the kitchen is neither large nor light enough. Shepherd," continued he, "with your good minister's leave and kind assistance, I propose to set up in this parish a Sunday School, and to make you the master. It will not interfere with your weekly calling, and it is the only lawful way in which you can turn the Sabbath into a day of some little profit to your family, by doing, as I hope, a great deal of good to the souls of others. The rest of the week you will work as usual. The difference of rent between this house and the clerk's I shall pay myself; for to put you in a better house at your own expense would be no

great kindness. As for honest Mary, who is not fit for hard labor, or any out of door work, I propose to endow a small weekly school, of which she shall be the mistress, and employ her notable turn to good account, by teaching ten or a dozen girls to knit, sew, spin, card, or any other useful way of getting their bread ; for all this I shall only pay her the usual price, for I am not going to make you rich, but useful."

"Not rich, Sir!" cried the Shepherd. "How can I ever be thankful enough for such blessings? And will my poor Mary have a dry thatch over head? and shall I be able to send for the doctor when I am like to lose her? Indeed my cup runs over with blessings. I hope God will give me humility."

Here he and Mary looked at each other and burst into tears. The gentlemen saw their distress, and kindly walked out upon the green before the door, that these honest people might give vent to their feelings. As soon as they were alone they crept into one corner of the room, where they thought they could not be seen, and fell on their knees, devoutly blessing and praising God for his mercies. Never were heartier prayers presented, than this grateful couple offered up for their benefactors. The warmth of their gratitude could only be equalled by the earnestness with which they besought the blessing of God on the work in which they were going to engage.

The two gentlemen now left this happy family, and walked to the parsonage, where the evening was spent in a manner very edifying to Mr. Johnson, who the next day took all proper measures for putting the Shepherd in immediate possession of his now comfortable habitation. Mr. Jenkins' father-in-law, the worthy gentleman who gave the Shepherd's wife the blankets, in the first part of this history, arrived at the parsonage before Mr. Johnson left it, and assisted in fitting up the clerk's cottage.

Mr. Johnson took his leave, promising to call on the worthy minister and his new clerk once a year, in his summer's journey over the Plain, as long as it would please God to spare his life. We hope he will never fail to give us an account of these visits, which we shall be glad to lay before our readers, if they should contain instruction or amusement

THE SHEPHERD'S HYMN.

The Lord my pasture shall prepare,
And feed me with a shepherd's care
His presence shall my wants supply,
And guard me with a watchful eye:
My noon-day walks he shall attend,
And all my midnight hours defend.

When on the sultry glebe I faint,
Or on the thirsty mountain pant,
To fertile vales and dewy meads
My weary, wand'ring steps he leads,
Where peaceful rivers, soft and slow,
Amid the verdant landscape flow.

Though in the paths of death I tread,
With gloomy horrors overspread,
My steadfast heart shall fear no ill;
For thou, O Lord, art with me still;
Thy friendly arm shall give me aid,
And guide me through the dreadful shade.

Though in a bare and rugged way,
Through devious, lonely wilds I stray,
Thy bounty shall my pains beguile;
The barren wilderness shall smile
With sudden greens and herbage crown'd,
And streams shall murmur all around.

Most of our readers, say the editors of the London Tract Magazine, are acquainted with that beautiful Tract, "*The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*," written by Mrs. Hannah More. The substance of this narrative is a correct account of David Saunders, of West Lavington, who died about the period of its publication.

God blessed him with an excellent wife and a numerous offspring; he had sixteen children, and twelve of them, at one time, were "like olive branches round his table." It is not to be supposed that a poor shep-

herd, with such a family, could be without difficulties, especially as his wife suffered much from sickness: but she was a most pious, notable woman, and all the children were brought up in early habits of industry. She, as well as her husband, fled to the Bible as their resource in the day of trial. His wages were but 6s. 3d. weekly, out of which he was sometimes obliged to pay a boy for assistance; but when times of peculiar necessity occurred, God always raised him up a friend. Dr. Stonehouse repeatedly assisted him; and sometimes his good neighbors in humbler life united to supply his wants. In one of his letters in his old age, the Shepherd thus writes, with much Christian simplicity: "As for my part, I am but very poorly in body, having very sore legs, and cannot perform the business of my flock without help. As to the things of this world, I have but little share, having my little cot to pray and praise God in, and a bed to rest on: so I have just as much of this world as I desire. But my garment is worn out, and some of my Christian friends think that they must put their mites together and buy me one, or else I shall not be able to endure the cold in the winter; so I can say, good is the Lord! he is still fulfilling his promise, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee!'"

A respected clergyman in Canada, after alluding to the above article, adds, "I well remember 'The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain,' when he was 72 years of age. He was then known in the religious circles of society by the name of 'David, the Shepherd.' He was usually dressed in a white russet coat, at that period the shepherd's fashion: and his gray, hoary hairs, with his deep-toned solemnity, and earnest vivacity in

social prayer and praise, are not erased from my recollection, although I presume 37 years have elapsed since I last saw him at public worship."

The following particulars relative to the Shepherd were communicated by a highly respectable gentleman, who, in the year 1829, visited the cottage where he lived, and the grave where his remains lie deposited, in the church-yard of West Lavington, England. *He there found the youngest son of the Shepherd,* (the only survivor out of sixteen children,) with whom he had a very interesting interview; and from whom he received not only a substantiation of all the principal facts which have been communicated to the world concerning the Shepherd, but also outlines of the character of some of his children, and one of his grandchildren, together with several plain poetic effusions of the latter, which breathe the same spirit of deep-toned piety that characterized the aged Shepherd.

David Saunders, the original of the very just and admirable portrait of an humble Christian, depicted in Mrs. More's Shepherd of Salisbury Plain, was born in 1717, and after struggling with the many difficulties and trials which the support of a large family of thirteen living children, upon an allowance of \$1 37 a week, may be well supposed to have occasioned, he died suddenly on the 9th of September, in the 80th year of his age.

For thirty years he was employed as Shepherd upon one farm, and having much leisure, he employed himself, whilst taking care of his flock, in reading the Bible, in meditating upon the wonderful works of God, and upon the still more wonderful plan of salvation.

When he was about 43 years old he married Lydia

Bishop, a pious young woman, who was often subject to severe illness. When trouble and sorrow preyed upon her spirits, she always had recourse to her husband's large Bible; which he used to keep in the thatch of his cottage, and there, by the grace of God, she always found something to comfort her.

The gentleman mentioned under the name of Mr. Johnson, in Mrs. More's 'Tract, was Dr. afterward Sir James Stonehouse, who took the greatest pleasure in assisting him in his various scenes of sorrow.

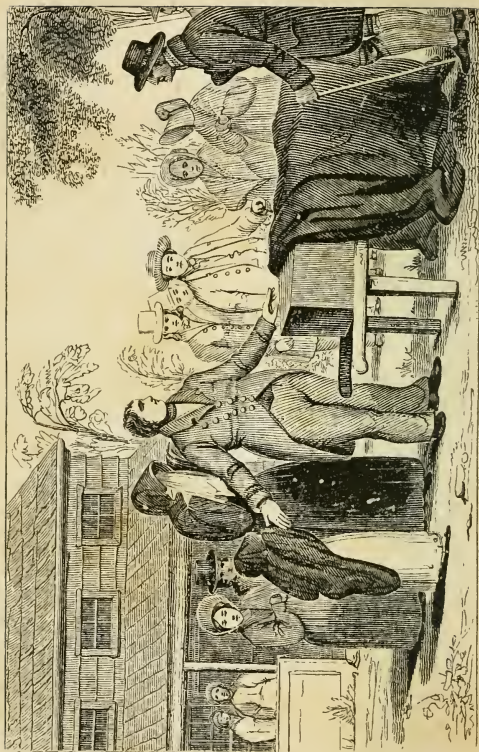
Such is the attractive power of true religion, that wherever, in the decline of his life, the good old Shepherd went, he was admired and loved; and when, about a year before his decease, the failure of his sight unfitted him for his employment, the neighboring farmers invited him to visit them for a month together. It had been his constant prayer that the Lord would not leave him to struggle long with illness before his death; and his request was granted. Being on a visit to a friend at Wyke, before retiring to rest one night, he was heard to pray with greater fervency than usual; then falling into a quiet sleep, it was found in the morning that his ransomed spirit had entered upon that rest for which it had been so long humbly hoping and eagerly panting.

He was interred in the church-yard of his own parish, with more than usual demonstrations of respect and sympathy.

A tombstone is now erecting to his memory, at the expense of the Rev. R. C. Caswell, Vicar of West Lavington, Wilts, with the following inscription:

Erected in the year 1829,
To the memory of
DAVID SAUNDERS,
Known through every quarter of the globe
Under the appellation of
The pious Shepherd of Salisbury Plain ;
Whose little history has now been read with admiration
By multitudes of Christians in
Europe, Asia, Africa, and America.
He was buried by his sons, Sept. 9th, 1796.
Also, in memory of his wife,
LYDIA SAUNDERS
Buried near this place, May 28th, 1785.





THE
MOUNTAIN MILLER.

AN AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE.

BY WILLIAM A. HALLOCK,
Corresponding Secretary of the American Tract Society.



THE MOUNTAIN MILLER.

It is the glory of the Gospel, that it is adapted to the circumstances and wants of ALL ; and equally to the glory of its great Author, that, while he "inhabiteth eternity," he condescends to "dwell" "with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." Such a spirit was perhaps the prevailing characteristic of the individual whose history is now presented to the reader, in a simple, unexaggerated *narrative of facts*.

I first became acquainted with JOSEPH BEALS about the year 1800. He lived in one of the then recent settlements on the beautiful range of the Green Mountains, which extend some hundreds of miles, in a northerly direction, near the western boundary of New England. I have learned that he was born, June, 1752, in Bridgewater, a few miles from Boston, in Massachusetts ; and that he early imbibed and cherished the sentiment, that *external morality, without a change of heart, may secure the salvation of the soul*.

Pecuniary embarrassments, occasioned by the struggle for our nation's independence induced him

in 1779 to seek a residence for himself and a rising family among the forests of the mountains, where his ax soon laid open a spot sufficiently large for the erection of a cottage, the sides of which were composed of the logs he had felled, and the roof was covered with bark or flat slips of wood.

He continued to make new inroads upon the forest ; and at length, by the fruits of his industry, succeeded in providing for his wife and little ones a more convenient though humble habitation, and storing it with a sufficiency of the necessaries of life. Here, when nothing occurred to persuade him to omit the duty, he frequently called his household around him to offer morning and evening devotions ; for having undertaken to procure heaven by his own righteousness, he thought family worship must constitute a part of it. And so watchful was he over himself, that, excepting his moroseness, his unyielding temper, the severity of his family government, his murmurings at the allotments of Providence, and his bitter opposition to the distinguishing doctrines of Evangelical religion, his life was, in the view of those around him, blameless.

Such was JOSEPH BEALS, when, in 1789, a year of great scarcity of provisions, God saw fit to teach him the true character of his heart by a very afflictive dispensation. Being absent from home one evening with his wife, at about 8 o'clock the alarm

was given that his house was in flames. They had proceeded too far to be arrested. The house was consumed, and with it nearly all the provisions he had laid in store. Thus perished in an hour the fruits of nearly ten years, and he saw little in the prospect but the wretchedness of absolute famine.

Here he found, probably for the first time, that he had no true submission to the will of God. He could not say, "Thy will be done." His heart repined against Him who orders all things well, and whose kind preservation of his children called loudly for gratitude. This led him seriously to question whether his religion was such as would stand the test of the last day. He found he could not endure the trials of this life, and he trembled in view of the retributions of eternity. For a time he struggled to banish the unwelcome thought, in his exertions to provide for his family; but when the abundant crops of the succeeding summer removed the occasion of this anxiety, his relish for earthly pursuits died away, and he had now become equally weary of his fruitless endeavors to work out a righteousness of his own.

Thus was he prepared, in the mysterious providence of God, for the visit of the Holy Spirit to "convince him of sin, of righteousness, and of a judgment to come." He was brought to see that the law of God is "exceeding broad," extending

not to the external actions merely, but to "the thoughts and intents of the heart;" that his sins were immeasurably great; that "all his righteousnesses were as filthy rags;" and that the day of final judgment was but a little way before him. He saw the wrath of God revealed against him, and neither acquiesced in its justice, nor perceived any way of escape. He betook himself to the Scriptures, and began to search them in earnest for relief, but they seemed to contain no promises or blessings for him. He was ready to despair of ever finding mercy. Every day, and sometimes every hour of the day, he would retire to the forest with his Bible, and there attempt to breathe out his prayer to the God who reared the stately trees, and whom he had so grievously offended. They, in every breeze before which they bent, were vocal with the praises of their Creator; but their song was mingled only with his bitter lamentations, and his rending cries for mercy to a God whose praise he could not sing.

Every thing he met seemed to concur with his own conscience in showing him the magnitude of his sins, and deepening his impressions of the realities of the judgment day. When husking his Indian corn, with his little sons beside him, the separation of the good ears from the bad so forcibly reminded him of the awful separation of the last day, when he expected to hear the sentence,

"Depart, ye cursed," that he could not continue his work, but was compelled abruptly to retire. Under these impressions, he went to his impenitent wife, thinking that he could convince her of the danger to which they were both exposed; but he found that the Lord only can affect the heart.

Thus he continued borne down with a sense of his sinfulness, and of "the wrath of God abiding on him;" recurring to his Bible, and his consecrated place of prayer; silently presenting himself wherever any were assembled for the worship of God, and using all the external means of grace, till, one morning as he was about to close his prayer with his family, he *suddenly broke forth in new strains of devotion, penitence and praise* for redeeming love; and continued praying, as his family believed, for more than an hour, apparently unconscious of the progress of time.

To his children, this fervor, as well as the previous anguish of his spirit, appeared quite unaccountable; for they seem scarcely to have heard that "except a man be *born again* he cannot see the kingdom of God," (John, 3: 3,) or to have known any thing of the renewing and sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost. But his wife, who had recently witnessed some other instances of sorrow for sin, followed by joy and peace in believing, *fear*ed that the same result was about to be realized in her husband, and to her impatient and unhum-

bled spirit the season of prayer was tedious almost beyond endurance.

In the husband and father God saw the temper of one now subdued by divine grace, broken for sin, and filled with arguments by the manifestations of redeeming love, pleading for mercy with the humility of a little child. In the wife and mother he saw the proud spirit, which would not accept of mercy, nor consent to its being bestowed upon her husband—but she knew not what blessings were to descend on her and her children in answer to his prayers.

The reality of what she feared became too evident to be questioned. Her husband enjoyed a cheering hope of his acceptance in Jesus Christ—a hope which the reader will not be disposed to think unfounded, when he learns the fruits by which it was accompanied, in that best of all evidences—a holy life. Such fruits of the Spirit I cannot but remark, for the benefit especially of young readers, are evidences of saving conversion, on which we should chiefly rely, whether the particular hour of our deliverance from condemnation is known to us, as was joyfully the case with the subject of this narrative, or not. The grand question to be solved is, whether we have surrendered our hearts to Christ—whether, whereas once we were blind, now we see—whether we have now the graces of the Spirit in exercise, proving our union with

Christ. The *manner* of the Spirit's operations in different minds is very diverse ; the *radical change* from sin to holiness is essentially the same in all who are truly converted to God.

From the time of the conversion of the subject of this narrative, his *heart* became engaged in all those religious duties which he had hitherto performed with a cold formality. His hopes of salvation, which before were grounded on his morality, now rested on the atoning sacrifice of Christ, through repentance and faith wrought in him by the Holy Spirit. His own sinfulness, apart from the merits of Christ, appeared greater than ever before ; but he saw there was perfect efficacy in the blood of the Lamb of God to take away all his sins. He put his trust in that Savior, and found him "worthy of all acceptance." His irritable temper became mild, and his heart expanded in love to God and man. He became an example of meekness and devotion to the cause of his Redeemer ; and early in 1791 publicly consecrated himself to him, by uniting with a small Evangelical church which had been formed in the district where he resided.

Immediately after his conversion, he began to pray and labor for the salvation of his family, instructing them from the Scriptures, and urging upon them the duty of submitting themselves without delay to Christ. Especially was he solicitous

for the salvation of *his wife*, in whom the opposition of the heart to vital godliness was most conspicuously manifested. His enjoyment in religion, and particularly his delight in spiritual communion with christian friends, were almost odious to her. He could with difficulty persuade her to attend a religious meeting ; or even to visit her friends with him, if she knew that Christians were to be present, such was his apparent delight in conversing with them. On one occasion, after visiting with him at the house of Captain S——, a relative and a heavenly-minded man, she determined never to go with him again ; for his mind was so engrossed with religious topics, that she thought herself quite forgotten. He sometimes remonstrated with her mildly ; assuring her that, if her heart were right with God, the subject of religion would be a source of the highest enjoyment. She was not inclined to credit his assertion ; but, in the waywardness of her mind, resolved, as she afterward told a friend, that, *if her views of religion should be changed, he should never know it.*

It was long before she relinquished all hope that what her companion thought was a change in his affections would prove a delusion. She considered murmuring and peevishness to be his besetting sin ; and when any unpleasant event occurred, she would wait with eagerness to see an exhibition of his former fretfulness—and it is more than can be

said of most professing Christians, that she is believed always to have waited in vain. On a Sabbath morning she had great hope that the adversary would triumph over him. The new settlers had united about this time in procuring the stated preaching of the Gospel, and he was careful always to be present at an early hour. He went out to his pasture to take an unruly horse, which formerly had caused him many a weary step and filled him with wrath; but though his patience was much tried by the animal, he came in filled with that peace which the sacredness of the day and of the delightful services in which he was about to engage were calculated to inspire.

The opposition of his wife to the spiritual religion he had embraced, rose to such a height, that on his being taken sick, as she afterward said, she even hoped he would not recover; but he was enabled to exhibit a life of uniform meekness, kindness, and sympathy in all her trials. He also prayed to God continually for her conversion. Nor did he cry in vain; for when God had tried his servant as long as he saw it to be needful for his discipline and growth in grace, he granted a gracious answer to his supplications, and she became a companion with whom he could hold sweet intercourse on the subject nearest his heart. In September, 1803, she united herself with the church. They then went joyfully "to the house of God"

and to the table of the Lord "in company," and were mutual helpers in their spiritual pilgrimage, till *together*, as the sequel will show, they took their departure for the "rest" which "remaineth to the people of God." After her conversion she felt that she could make no sufficient atonement to him for her opposition. He wished no atonement but that she should faithfully serve his blessed Master; but she declared to a pious friend, that, if he would have permitted it, it would have been a relief to her mind to fall on her knees before him and humbly beg his forgiveness.

Soon after his conversion he found his first-born son earnestly seeking an interest in Christ, and the concern of a little daughter, at the age of four years, lest her soul should be lost, also awakened his tenderest sympathies. With this child, the incidents of whose death will hereafter be mentioned, he spent many sleepless hours, endeavoring to compose her agitated feelings by instilling into her mind a knowledge of that Savior, who, when upon earth, "took little children into his arms and blessed them."

He became also very active and useful in visiting the sick and afflicted; instructing those who were inquiring the way of salvation, and animating the desponding Christian.

About the year 1798 he purchased a corn-mill, which he regularly attended during most of the re-

maining years of his life, as a means of supporting his family. He usually appeared in a miller's dress, unless when attending public or social worship, and is remembered as the PIOUS MILLER, probably by all who knew him.

The purchase of this mill was, to many of the friends of the Redeemer, an occasion, at first, of sincere regret, on the ground that his confinement to it must greatly interfere with his usefulness. But they soon saw how divine Providence, who is infinite in wisdom, rendered this circumstance the means of good. His mill became a frequent resort of those inquiring the way to Zion, and was doubtless the gate of heaven to many wandering sinners. For many years he was almost always to be found there, and was ever ready to converse on the great concerns of eternity. Few of the children of God entered his mill without receiving some new impulse to fidelity in the Christian life—few impenitent sinners without being affectionately warned—rarely a child without being instructed in religion—and none, without seeing in him a living example of its power.

Many instances might be specified in which individuals were greatly helped in their spiritual course by a visit to this mill. One was the case of Mr. G. V. a man who, like the Miller, had cherished from his early years an undoubting confidence in his own external morality for salvation ; but who had been

led to see that his heart must be renewed, or he must be lost. He found no one who seemed so thoroughly to understand his case as the Miller, and often resorted to him for instruction and counsel. By the grace of God he was enabled, at length, to cast himself on Christ for salvation, and became a steadfast pillar in the church.

An eminent and faithful clergyman has also informed the writer, that when he was brought to see his danger as a sinner, he frequently went several miles, from a neighboring town, descending and climbing the long hills, that he might avail himself of the Miller's counsel and prayers; and an exemplary physician states that the Miller was the first person that ever asked him if he had been born again.

The spot where so many thus met the pious Miller, and his devout aspirations so often ascended to God, and even the pure perennial spring of water by the road-side, where he used to drink, bursting from the rocks in a basin three or four feet from the ground, as if hewn by God for the purpose, and shaded by two beautiful sugar maples, have still a sacredness around them, which will remain till all who knew him and feel the value of religion shall have followed him to eternity.

Confined as he was during six days of the week, he most scrupulously reserved the whole of the Lord's day for religious purposes. And though he

himself considered the Sabbath as commencing at midnight, he usually shut his gate at the close of day on Saturday ; for he would not allow customers to be waiting for their meal on Saturday evening during hours which *they thought* holy time, and scrupulously regarded the feelings of his brethren of the church, who considered the Sabbath as commencing with the setting sun.

At the close of the year 1804 God saw fit to try him, and to honor the religion he had professed, by calling him suddenly to part with his eldest daughter, for whose spiritual welfare, at the tender age of four years, he had, as above related, felt so much anxiety. He was not confident of her preparedness for heaven ; but he was enabled to betake himself to a still higher source of consolation, while he cast her upon the mercy of his heavenly Father, and felt that he would do all things well. She was a lovely daughter, in all the bloom of youth. The stroke was most severe. He plead with God for her, and was all that a father could be to her, till she was gone, cheered by a faith " the sorrow of the world " could not reach, and laboring at the same time to turn the tears of all around him to praise. He knew not, he said, but he as cheerfully gave her up to God as he received her from his hand. His tongue was loosed in heavenly conversation, and he repeated, with much emotion the whole of his favorite Psalm,

"Sweet is the work, my God, my King,
"To praise thy name, give thanks and sing," &c.

Such a state of mind continued, though with an increase of his spiritual joys, until the hour appointed for her burial, when his Christian friends, who came in great numbers to sympathize with him, saw in his sweet and placid countenance a glow, indicating unearthly peace and joy, and giving emphasis to the words of salvation which flowed irrepressibly from his lips. It was the custom of the plain and affectionate people among whom he resided, after the funeral exercises, to place the coffin on a table a little distance from the house, where all who were present might take a last look at the deceased; after which they would fall back in a circle, while the bereaved relatives approached for the same purpose. Such was the proceeding on this occasion. The devout Miller presented himself, his broken-hearted wife and children beside him, and with his head uncovered, and a countenance so serene and joyful that its expression will never be obliterated from the minds of many who were present, placed his hand upon the coffin's edge, and in a voice mellowed by the bursting emotions of his heart, began to speak to the sympathizing friends around him of the sweet consolations of religion in such an hour. He appealed to them, that they knew how he loved her whose remains then lay be-

fore him—how suddenly she had been called into eternity ; but assured them, such had been the kindness and mercy of God to him in this affliction—such the spiritual consolations he had received—such the smiles of the Savior's countenance and the joys of his presence, that that day had been *the happiest day of his life* ; and the sweet peace he had experienced outweighed all the joys of earth. Here, said he, is a mirror into which we all may look. We shall soon be as this beloved child is. Are we prepared for judgment and eternity ? Nothing but an interest in Christ will then avail us. He urged all who knew not the consolations of religion, which he now found so precious, to embrace it without delay, and all who had embraced it to be more holy, and come up more fully to the enjoyment of the privileges to which their Redeemer invited them. Thus he proceeded for some minutes, in a strain of affection and solemnity that brought eternity in full view, and melted the hearts of the whole concourse. On repairing to the grave, as soon as the body was lowered to its long home, he began again to speak of the necessity of preparation for eternity, filling up the moments till the grave was closed ; and when his wife afterward asked if he did not say more than was proper, he told her such was his sense of the value of the soul, he *could not* refrain. Veterans in sin, who had seldom wept before, united their sympathies with

the throbbing bosoms of youth, in witnessing these scenes ; and hardened unbelievers, as they retired, were heard to say, " I thought the religion of those called devout Christians was a delusion. I once called JOSEPH BEALS a hypocrite ; but when I saw and heard him to-day, at his daughter's funeral, I knew he had something to support him that I had never experienced."

The manner in which the Miller was sustained in this affliction is to be ascribed to no sudden burst of excited feeling, but to special aids of the Holy Spirit, imparted to one who habitually lived near to God, and maintained an abiding sense that, though " clouds and darkness are round about him," " righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." From the time of his conversion, the language of his heart in every trying dispensation seemed to be, " It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." From that period no murmuring word against the dealings of his Maker is known to have escaped his lips. At one time, when a dear babe was apparently brought near to death, and his wife expressed her fears respecting the result, he told her that, much as it had entwined itself in their affections and engaged their prayers, he felt that he could resign it without any reserve to God, to do with it according to his holy pleasure.

The same confidence in God supported him

when, nearly six years after the death of his eldest daughter, he was called to bury his second daughter, at the age of twenty-one, who departed in the assured hope of heaven. Though his soul was not ravished with the manifestations of the Divine presence, as in the former trial, he was composed, and sweetly submissive to the will of God.

In all the circumstances of his life his Christian course was remarkably uniform. No calamity on the one hand, however severe, was suffered greatly to depress his spirits; nor, on the other, did any scene through which he passed greatly elate them. A mild and calm expression usually sat on his countenance, indicative of the heavenly peace that reigned within. The character which he exhibited in the occasional company of Christians, or in the meeting for social worship, he exemplified also in his family and in his common intercourse with men. None felt so deeply as his most intimate acquaintance, that his holy life proceeded from an abiding sense of the presence of God, and of his obligations to live entirely for his glory. His wife and children often conversed with deep interest on *the probability that God would soon call him away from them*. Heaven seemed to be already begun in his heart, and he appeared rather to "desire to depart" and be with his Savior, where sin would be done away, and he should "see him as he is." As he was walking one day with a daughter in the

grave-yard, she said to him, "Father, are you *always* ready to go?" He meekly replied, "The prospect of living here always would be melancholy to me."

In the summer of 1813 the period came when his pantings for heaven were to be realized, and when the prayer of the Great Intercessor must be answered concerning him, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." He was violently attacked with a prevailing fever, which in a few days (on the 20th July) released him from this body of sin, at the age of sixty-one. In this sickness he was calm, patient, and resigned to the will of God; but in the rapid progress of the disease he found occasion to say, that, though he had a thousand times reminded others that a sick bed is a poor place in which to prepare for death, he then thought much more unfavorably of it than he ever did before. But through abounding grace, he had long been ripening for his departure. It was only for the spirit to burst its earthly tabernacle, and its abode was in glory. He died suddenly, in a fit of faintness, having had no premonition that death was immediately near, and with no opportunity to add any thing to that best of all evidence of his good estate—a life of devoted piety.

His body was interred in the grave-yard, near his

accustomed place of worship, where a plain and neat marble slab, bearing his name, age, and the date of his death, is erected as the only memorial of "THE MOUNTAIN MILLER." A notice of his death was inserted in the county newspaper, with this expressive and appropriate motto : "*His presence animated the Christian and awed the sinner ;*" which would have been his whole recorded story, had not some special indications of Providence convinced the writer of this narrative of his duty to communicate it for the benefit, he trusts, of thousands.

His wife, for whose conversion he labored and prayed, and who was afterward so long the partner of his spiritual joys, was seized with a fever of a kindred character, almost simultaneously with himself, and died on the second day after his decease : not being informed of his departure, though under the same roof, till their happy spirits greeted each other in the presence of their Redeemer above.

Several traits in the character of the MILLER are worthy of a distinct consideration.

His uniform and consistent piety. It proceeded from a heart regenerated by the Holy Spirit and guided by his influences. It was founded on the soul-subduing doctrines of the cross. His conversation abounded in practical views of the holiness and other perfections of God—the love and mercy

of Christ—our sinfulness—the excellence of vital religion, and other kindred topics. No man was more easy of access on religious subjects. He was never addressed when they were not uppermost in his mind, or when he had not words to speak for Christ and his cause. If conversation was introduced on worldly subjects, he would soon turn it to the concerns of eternity, and in a manner so natural and familiar, that it rarely struck the mind of any as abrupt. “Out of the abundance of the heart” his mouth spake, and “the law of kindness” was upon his lips. When a man came to his mill angry, because the poor beast that brought him, and which he had been beating unmercifully, had occasioned him delay, “What do you think,” said the Miller, “of this passage, ‘Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness?’” At another time, when a number of persons were speaking, with some animation, of their prospects of removing to a distant part of the country, “Well,” said he, “I expect to move but once more—and then into eternity!”

The excellency of religion appeared in his character *at all times*, so far as any one of his most intimate friends can remember. A very devoted and useful missionary to India, who went from the neighborhood of the Miller, and who is now doubtless with him in glory, when informed of his death, wrote back, that “he should ever esteem it an

honor to have belonged to the same church with JOSEPH BEALS."

To the venerable father of that missionary, who knew the Miller most intimately, and who was eminently qualified to appreciate his real character, the writer is indebted for a letter, some passages of which will be interwoven in what remains of this brief sketch. "Before he experienced that change which was so visible to all conversant with him," says this letter, "his life was usually regarded as *strictly moral*; but his religion was formal—partaking neither of that love to God, nor good will to man, which the Gospel inspires. After the change in him, it became spiritual and evangelical. It never rose to enthusiastic zeal. It was uniform and durable; and manifested itself in active life. He brought forth much fruit to the glory of God, and thereby gave indubitable evidence that he was, in reality, a disciple of Christ. A never-failing spring—affording nearly the same quantity of pure water at a time of the severest drought, as in a season of abundance of rain—is a happy emblem of the piety of this eminently good man."

His meekness. This was perhaps the predominant trait in his character. The expression of his countenance clearly bespoke his communion with God. Perhaps the presence of no other man would silence so soon a company of the rude and dissolute—not because he attacked them openly, but from

the impressions of the reality of religion and of eternal things which his presence awakened. Probably he *did not hear an oath in all the latter years of his life*; for the most profane revered him. It has been remarked by a very intimate friend, that, though from the time of his conversion always cheerful, he almost never laughed; or if he did, he would for a time be silent, and seem to reflect on it as unbecoming one who must soon appear before God.

His abiding sense of the uncertainty of life and the retributions of eternity. The prevailing theme, and his familiar conversation with his friends, in his family, and in the social circle, were the *uncertainty of life, the importance of a preparation for death, and "the glory that shall be revealed"* in them that love God. These truths filled and animated his soul. In the long winter evenings, when he would sometimes fall asleep in his chair, the introduction by his family of some topic of vital religion would rouse him at once, and he would kindle into animation. When he came in and sat, his Bible was generally before him, and in it he said *he always found something new*. At the last religious meeting he attended, a few hours before the attack of fever that closed his life, he urged these truths with great seriousness, and prayed with great fervency that they might be felt and practically improved by all. "He abounded," says the friend from whose letter

we have quoted, "in speaking of the solemnity of dying and appearing before God in judgment. His conversation would never tire, and it seemed that he was never tired of religious conversation. It was once my privilege to spend two days with him on a short journey. Our conversation on the way, and wherever we called, was almost wholly on things pertaining to the kingdom of God; yet at the end of the second day, the time had been so agreeably spent that it seemed as though the interview had but just commenced, and we were obliged abruptly to close our conversation and part."

His preciousness to the awakened sinner. The conversation of no private individual was perhaps ever more ardently sought by those inquiring the way of salvation; and no man, perhaps, ever felt more deeply the responsibility and delicacy of dealing with persons in that state of mind. Calling with a pious friend on Mrs. B—— in a neighboring town, she related to them the despairing state of her daughter, and begged him to pray with them. But she found his tender heart was so full, that for some minutes he could not speak to lead their devotions. Deeply as he felt for awakened sinners, he never sought to "heal slightly" the wounds which sin had made. He never told them of their blameless life, or intimated that they were making progress toward heaven, while they continued the enemies of God. He considered thei

views of the enormity of sin, and the nearness of eternity, as feeble compared with the reality ; and urged them to surrender their hearts without delay to Christ, as the only way to obtaining enduring and substantial peace. He represented Christ as knocking for admission to their hearts—as standing with open arms ready to receive them ; and urged them no longer to resist such love, but to make the surrender of their all to him. When, in the social meeting, he rose to say a word for the cause of Zion, or to lead in prayer, those who were anxious for their salvation listened with eagerness. They knew what he said proceeded from a heart deeply solicitous for their welfare, and felt that his prayers would avail with God.

His perseverance in doing good. The continual object of his life was emphatically to *persuade men to embrace Christ*, and serve him faithfully. The benevolent exertions of the present age for the heathen, which he lived to see commenced, had his cordial approbation ; but though he longed and prayed for the conversion of the world to God, the sphere of his *efforts* was mainly confined to the circle in which he moved. Not satisfied with the opportunities of usefulness afforded at his mill, he often, in his later years, committed it for a few days to the care of one of his sons, and some time before his death, having the means of subsistence, and “ owing no man any thing, but to love one an-

other," sold it, that he might devote his declining years more exclusively to the welfare of souls. As an illustration of his persevering endeavors, the following fact is adduced: "Monthly meetings for prayer for the influences of the Holy Spirit, of which he was, if not the first mover, the principal and constant supporter, had been established not very far from his dwelling, and continued for a number of years, when nearly all on whom he had depended for their support forsook them; till at length only two or three attended. But his zeal—his resolution—his patience, were not yet exhausted. He still continued his exertions to sustain the meetings—hoping almost against hope—until he saw a little cloud arising—a few drops of mercy began to fall, and the abundant blessing of the Holy Spirit to descend. The neighborhood was thinly settled, but instead of two or three, the aged and the young crowded to attend the meetings, and the house was filled. He now, with wonder and delight, saw the salvation of God, and was actively engaged in doing all in his power to promote the good work of the Holy Spirit, and in directing anxious inquirers to the fountain where they might 'buy wine and milk without money and without price.' "

His life of prayer. None had the privilege of uniting with him in this exercise without feeling that he was addressing a God with whom he had

intimate communion. In his private devotions he sought to be unobserved, yet his family were not ignorant of his regularity in this duty, and often well knew the sacred moments when he was pleading for them and others before the throne of his Heavenly Father. His regular devotions in the family were fervent. And besides his delight in the social prayer-meeting, he was ever ready to embrace occasions for special prayer. In the interval of public worship, in the warm season of the year, he was frequently observed to retire, with a beloved Christian friend, toward a neighboring grove. It has since been ascertained that they improved that hour for some years, when no special call of duty interrupted, in visiting a sequestered spot for united prayer—that their own hearts might be replenished with divine grace; that the children of both families, and especially his wife during the time that she continued impenitent, might be converted; that the Holy Spirit might be shed down in the revival of religion; and the Redeemer's kingdom be advanced throughout the world.

His care for the spiritual welfare of his family. This was especially manifested in the importance he attached to their regular morning and evening devotions. He selected the most favorable hours, and nothing was permitted to interrupt them. He accompanied the reading of the Bible with plain practical suggestions; extending his remarks as he

thought would be most useful to his household ; not neglecting them on the one hand, nor wearying them on the other. He directed their minds, both in his conversation and prayers, to the passing events of Providence, that they might notice in them the hand of God, be grateful for his mercies, submit to his chastisements, and suitably improve all his dispensations. All of them who survive have publicly professed their faith in Christ.

His deportment in the house of God. He was a constant attendant, and always took care to present himself early. His venerable pastor has informed the writer, that, for a long course of years, as he entered the sanctuary, a sight of the countenance of the MILLER gladdened his heart ; for he knew he should have at least one hearer who would be attentive, who would love the truth, and whose prayers would be ascending for the presence and blessing of God. Ministers, who for the first time addressed the congregation, would distinguish him from the rest of the audience, and say they could with pleasure preach to him, if they had no other attentive hearer. He did not discourage his minister by sleeping. His heavenly deportment seemed to say, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts—Blessed are they that dwell in thy house ; they will be still praising thee."

His temperance. This virtue he practiced not merely in regard to strong liquors, but in the use

of food ; and it doubtless contributed in no small degree to promote the rare assemblage of excellencies which were combined in his Christian character—his uniform cheerfulness ; his consistency ; his readiness to engage in religious exercises ; his wakefulness in the house of God ; and the perpetual elevation of his religious affections.

The combinations of his character are thus summed up by the respected friend from whom we have quoted :—"He was unusually grave and serious. He was neither a flatterer nor a slanderer —'not given to wine'—'not greedy of filthy lucre,' for he appeared almost indifferent to the world. He was sound in the faith. He ruled his children and his household well. His godly example spoke powerfully in favor of the reality and the excellence of religion. Indeed I think I can say that JOSEPH BEALS, by his life, exhibited a more eminent, a more uniform, a more striking example of piety, than any other individual with whom it was ever my privilege to be acquainted."

A testimony kindred to the above is given by one who is now a preacher of the Gospel, and in a station of much responsibility and usefulness in the Christian Church : "With my earliest recollections," he says, "are associated the godly example, the affectionate Christian admonitions, and the ardent prayers of the pious MILLER. Often have I stood beside him in his mill, and heard the gracious

words which fell from his lips for my own benefit and that of others. Often have I hung upon his lips in the social meeting, when he spoke of the blessedness of that salvation to which I was then a stranger ; and seen him lead in the devotions, apparently in the attitude of the most intimate communion with God, and of even then bringing down spiritual blessings from on high. Often did I accompany him homeward from the social meeting, still breathing the language of Canaan. I was, alas, unrenewed, and at heart still alienated from God ; but I knew that I must obtain an interest in Christ or finally perish ; and there was no man whose example and counsel I thought could do so much for my spiritual good, and whose prayers for me I thought would be so efficacious at the throne of grace.

“ I very well remember the morning when I met a messenger who announced to me that the pious *Miller was gone*. I had no more reason to value his Christian character than other youth around me ; but a flood of tears instantly poured down my cheeks, from the reflection that another barrier between me and perdition was removed. I immediately went and conveyed the tidings to a respected father of the church, whose tears flowed plentifully with mine ; the heart of his affectionate Pastor, who had been accustomed to assuage the sorrows of others by administering spiritual consolation,

seemed severely smitten ; and a gloom of sadness hung over every hill, and forest, and landscape around me ; for although the Miller was humble, and obscure, and unknown beyond the circle of a few miles ; yet in that circle he was loved and venerated as a man of God and a spiritual guide ; and the language of all seemed to be, ' Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth ; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.'

" Since the departure of the Miller I have had the happiness to become intimately acquainted with a large circle of christian friends, in city and country ; and I hesitate not to say, that, with the exception of one other departed saint, the savor of whose name ' is as ointment poured forth,' but of whose character many circumstances might lead me to form too high an estimate, I have never known the individual who, in my view, lived so near to God, and bore so much of the image of his blessed Master as did JOSEPH BEALS."

Is the Reader a *follower of Christ* ? Let the example of the Miller incite you to *raise higher* your standard of holy living. Rest not short of the blessed eminence in piety which he attained ; nor of the high behests to which the bleeding Savior calls you, and to which, consecrating yourself *wholly* to him, his grace shall raise you.

Is the Reader only *almost* persuaded to be a

Christian? Weigh well the history of this humble individual, both before and after his conversion. Mark the blessed fruits of a spiritual religion—what abiding peace and joy it afforded him—what love to God and to his fellow-men it wrought in him—what a blessing it made him to his friends and acquaintance, and the church of God—how it supported him in trials, and sustained him in death. Would you have his sweet consolations in life and in death, and partake of his eternal joys, seek religion where he found it. Look at the law of God, till you see its extent and purity, and the terrors of that curse it pronounces against sin. Look at your own heart till you see how, in thought, word, and deed—by sins of omission and commission—you have violated that law in the sight of a holy God. Behold the atoning sacrifice offered for you by our glorious Redeemer on the cross. Hear him say, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Go and prostrate yourself before him. Confess your sins. Tell him you are “a wretch undone.” Cast yourself on his mercy, and if you perish, perish at his feet. Do this, and your soul shall live. The same Savior who said, “Except a man be *born again* he cannot see the kingdom of God,” said also, “Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” Come now, and yield yourself to him. This is the language the pious Miller would utter in your ear,

could he speak to you from heaven. Come now ; let nothing hinder you. Now, while your day of probation yet lasts. Now, while the voice of mercy yet speaks to you. Now, while God is moving on your heart by the silent influences of his Spirit. Now—before you lay aside this Tract. Fall on your knees. Let your hard heart break. Give yourself to him who died for you. “ Behold, now is the accepted time ! behold, now is the day of salvation ! ”

Note.—The Miller lived in Plainfield, Ms. a mile south of his accustomed place of worship. In 1829 the dwelling where he died, and from which he buried his eldest daughter, was yet standing. His mill had been rebuilt.

GEORGE VINING:

OR,

THE MOTHER'S LAST PRAYER.

A NARRATIVE OF FACTS



GEORGE VINING.

In the year 1792 I was called to the pastoral charge of a congregation of new settlers, who had removed from the vicinity of Boston, and located themselves at P——, on the Green Mountains; in the same State. Some of them had sat under preaching far from evangelical, but their common hardships constituted a bond of union ; and as soon as they had made an opening in the forest, and provided a shelter for their families, they united without a dissenting voice to secure the public ordinances of the Gospel. It was an interesting scene when they assembled at the earliest dawn of day to raise the heavy timbers for a house of worship. I believe that every male inhabitant of the district was present, and the stillness of night yet reigned when I was called to lead them in invoking the blessing of God.

No people were ever apparently more harmonious ; yet I soon discovered in a number of individuals a decided hostility to the humbling doctrines of the Gospel. Among these was GEORGE VINING, who, at the time of my settlement, was thirty-eight years of age. . He had been early left an orphan ;

at eight was placed as an apprentice in an irreligious family; was married at twenty-two; and then sat for thirteen years under preaching which inculcated a good moral life as the ground of acceptance with God.

He was eminently a self-made man. His mind was vigorous and independent; his thoughts original, and often expressed with surprising terseness and force. His mind was metal *in the ore*. For fifteen years he was one of the most attentive hearers I addressed; but it was only to parry every argument and reject every truth that conflicted with his system of salvation.

The Holy Spirit converted many around him, and among them the wife of his bosom; but the only visible effect on him was to render him more decided in defending his own opinions. She has told me, that on returning from public worship she always dreaded to take a seat with him on the horse, which was their only conveyance, as he failed not to go home quarreling with the truths he had heard; and what was worse, to vent his bitterness against them in the presence of his family of six sons and five daughters, all of whom were far from God. If his wife uttered a word in their defence, his authoritative tone would silence her, and thus secure the argument.

He indulged himself in like manner in the circle at the public-house, whither he loved to repair from

the labors of his farm, to exchange horses, and mingle his social feelings as the glass passed briskly; and where his loud voice, his ready wit, and his bitter thrusts at vital religion, gave him a sad pre-eminence.

The town is intersected by a small river, with long and steep acclivities on either side, spreading out as they recede into beautiful table lands gradually ascending, bringing a large part of the farms and dwellings of the inhabitants in full view of each other, and presenting, in distant prospect, the spires of a number of neighboring churches. Vining's residence was on the opposite side of the gulf, about two miles from my own, and as some of my shade trees excluded the public-house from his view, he rudely but honestly requested their removal. That public-house was his paradise, where the native brilliancy of his mind sparkled and was admired. Often, as I sat in my study on Saturday evening, endeavoring to prepare my mind and heart for the Lord's day, have I heard the rude trampling of horses passing rapidly by as the group dispersed, and recognized Vining's voice drowning that of his companions, and perhaps convulsing them with laughter.

Yet on the following morning he would be early at the house of God, and always listen with attention. Not unfrequently he would call on me, perhaps abruptly commencing his interview by saying,

"Well, Mr. H——, I like you as a man, but I don't like your preaching. I don't believe the heart is depraved, as you represent it. I suppose you think what you preach is true, but I don't."

He would then sit down and debate the point, often with much shrewdness, till, feeling that enough had been said, and seeming to have an instinctive apprehension of the value of a minister's time, he would rise, seize his hat, kindly bid me farewell, and in an instant would be gone.

In one of these visits, when his mind had become intent on the arguments for and against the doctrines of the cross, he broke out in a loud, half ironical tone, with a shrewd glance of the eye as if he were condescending to our religious weakness, and with astonishing recklessness of feeling, "*Well, perhaps I shall come over yet. They say—I know nothing about it—but they say MY MOTHER DIED WHEN I WAS TWO WEEKS OLD, AND JUST BEFORE SHE BREATHED HER LAST, SHE TOOK ME IN HER ARMS AND BLESSED ME, AND GAVE ME UP TO GOD!!*"

"Mr. Vining may yet be brought in," said my now departed wife when he was gone, with a breaking heart and hoping against hope: "God is a prayer-hearing God, and that MOTHER'S LAST PRAYER may yet be answered."

He had now been hardening in sin *more than fifty years*. His oldest son had left the paternal roof, and apparently inheriting all his father's faults, with

little of his stability of character, changed from one object to another, till he located himself in D——, Vermont, on the borders of Canada, and engaged in the traffic of lumber. With the ministrations of the sanctuary he had taken leave of the Bible ; the Sabbath he profaned by business or amusement ; and he loved the exhilaration of the festive bowl.

But a prayer-hearing God had his purposes of mercy, and was not straitened in his means of fulfilling them. Through the example and influence of a pious lady, an impression was made on his mind that religion is a reality, and that he must be "*born again*," or perish. He struggled to conceal his alarm ; obtained some fragments of a Bible, studied them in secret, and soon saw clearly that he was ruined by sin ; that there was no hope but in Christ, and was brought humbly to accept of his mercy. His thoughts quickly reverted to his obdurate father and his almost disconsolate mother ; and without delay he wrote them all the feelings of his heart.

The father soon called on me, saying, with his characteristic frankness, and with unusual apparent seriousness, " Mr. H——, we have received a most surprising letter from my son F——. He is up there in the wilderness, with no means of grace, and thinks he is converted ; and it is unaccountable to me that, ignorant as he was about religion, he tells the same story that you do. I confess it

looks some like being taught by 'one and the same Spirit.' "

It was not long before this son visited his parents. His heart was full, and he related to the listening family what he had experienced; ascribing it all to the sovereign mercy of God, who had opened his blind eyes, showed him his sin and danger, and led him to the Savior.

As he unfolded God's dealings with him, a conflict words cannot describe agitated his mother's heart. To hear such language from his lips was indeed "life from the dead;" but at every new disclosure she trembled lest her husband should break out in wrath against the hated truths he uttered, denouncing the whole as fanaticism—and vindicate, with increased obstinacy, his cherished errors. The depravity of the human heart, the sovereignty of the Divine purposes, dependence on the Holy Spirit, and salvation solely through the efficacy of atoning blood, were doctrines with which he had been at war ever since he came to years of discretion. But he heard in silence the whole narration of his son, and then only added with much seriousness, "*I do not know but these things are so.*"

He was soon again at my house, related all his son had said, and with a solemnity and tenderness I had never observed before, added, "*If these things are so, all my hopes are without foundation.*"

A few evenings afterwards he accompanied his wife to the residence of one of his daughters who had recently married; but the great subject of salvation so pressed upon his heart that he could not be induced to take a mouthful of the plain refreshment provided. "Mr. Vining," said the wife of his Pastor to him on this occasion, "how greatly should we rejoice to have you submit to Christ. Not only would your own soul be saved, but you might then be a blessing to your family and the church of God. If you live and die as you are, you will be no substantial benefit to either; but must spend an eternity in misery."

Those words, he afterwards said, sank into his heart. That night he scarcely closed his eyes. His long-cherished views of the method of salvation appeared baseless as a dream. He saw he must have light from the Bible and aid from the Holy Spirit, or perish. He was dumb in his opposition to the doctrines of the cross, and felt that he needed unmerited mercy. He came to me again and again. "*I now see,*" said he, "what neither you nor all other ministers could have convinced me of, that I am *totally depraved.*"

He saw that God would be just in his condemnation, but his heart rose against that justice. All his former refuges failed. He felt that he was sinking, and needed some deliverer; yet all we could do was unavailing to bring him to accept of

Christ. At every religious meeting he would be present, borne down with the weight of his sins. He had cherished them for half a century, and cherished his unbelief. He wondered that the patience of God had not long since been exhausted; and saw not but he must lie down in eternal sorrow. In the interval of public worship he was one of many who came to my house to spend the hour in religious conversation and prayer. "How are you to-day, Mr. Vining?" said one very tenderly. "He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out; he hath made my chain heavy," was his only reply, and in tones that indicated the crushing weight of a burden which God only could remove.

Another Sabbath arrived before he would yield the contest with his Maker. A discourse that day on the judgment, he said, "was the first sermon I ever heard. I saw myself at the bar of God, with my sins all before me. A lie that I told when a child, and which I had not thought of *for thirty years*, came as fresh to my memory as if it had been yesterday. My whole life appeared filled up with sin against a holy God. I saw there was nothing in me but sin—that God's law condemned me to the lowest hell, and that it was just. God then appeared to be as glorious in his *justice* as in his *mercy*."

"At evening," he continued, "as I approached

the prayer-meeting, I heard them singing from the 119th Psalm,

‘My soul lies cleaving to the dust—
‘Lord, give me life divine.’

The feelings of my heart, as those precious words fell on my ear, I can never describe ; they reached my inmost soul. Never did I hear music so melodious, like one of the songs of heaven. I saw that I was vile ; but that in Christ there was an ocean of love and mercy. I saw he justly claimed all my heart, and I wished to give him ALL. I wanted an eternity and angelic powers to praise him. I wondered that there could be a rebel on earth unmoved by his love and his glorious perfections, and longed that he should be honored and praised by every child of Adam.”

The whole subsequent life of Mr. Vining showed that the change was real. He publicly professed Christ by uniting with the church, and became not only an attentive but spiritual worshiper. The idle group at the public-house was deserted, and his delight was in the company of the devout. He loved prayer, and for many years was the principal supporter of regular weekly prayer-meetings in his neighborhood. He was a fearless and decided Christian. Much of the native roughness of his character remained, but a life of consistent piety

gave unquestionable evidence that he had "*been born again.*"

Two or three traits in his character deserve special notice. One of these was,

His study of the Bible.—As he had few or no helps in Commentaries, he brought his own powers more diligently and prayerfully to the work of "comparing Scripture with Scripture," and thus understanding its spiritual import; and it became to him an exhaustless fountain at once of entertainment and of religious knowledge. Almost from Sabbath to Sabbath he came to me, in the interval of worship, as a humble inquirer for light on some portion of the inspired Word. With an adroitness peculiar to himself, he would almost break into my study, (where he knew he was welcome,) instantly propose his inquiry, and as suddenly depart.

"Mr. H——," perhaps he would say, "what is the import of our Savior's words, '*It is more blessed to give than to receive?*' I believe they are generally understood to refer merely to giving *money*. But the apostle had been just telling the Ephesian elders how he had been warning every one night and day with tears, and then says, '*So laboring, ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, It is more blessed,*' &c. Are not Christ's words equally an encouragement to *prayer* and *effort in every way*, for the conversion of souls?" I gave my assent. "Well," said he,

shrewdly addressing a lad at our side, as if to test his acquaintance with the Scriptures, and express his wonder that multitudes remained so ignorant of them, "you know *we read* that *charity begins at home!*" "Not in the Bible, Sir," was the reply; and in a moment our kind inquirer was gone.

There was always pertinency in his inquiries, and his original thoughts and child-like docility often quickened my ideas of truth, and warmed and animated my heart.

Another subject that continually pressed sore upon him, was *the unhappy influence he had, before his conversion, exerted upon others, and especially upon his children*. He did not doubt Divine forgiveness, but feared souls were already lost, and others pressing their way irreclaimably to perdition, through his ungodly example and influence; and he could not cease to mourn over the consequences of his guilt. *Never did he speak to me of his neglect of his children without tears.*

"I neither prayed," said he, "with them nor for them. I long for the privilege of consecrating them to God from their earliest existence, and training them in infancy and childhood to fear Him; but most of them are out of my reach. Some are heads of families, some are far away, and one is dead."

Equally did he reproach himself for his *unceasing contention with the truth*. "I depended for salva-

tion," said he, "on my abominable moral religion, and I had not even that."

He was also intent on *redeeming the time*. On one occasion, when a heavy rain had fallen on a deep snow towards the close of winter, and rendered the roads almost utterly impassable, some one unexpectedly knocked at my door—it was Vining, wet as if he had been wading a river. He had come two miles on foot, descending and climbing the long hills; his hard countenance expressed the deepest emotion—his lips trembled, and the bursting of his heart almost prevented utterance.

"I want," said he, "Mr. H——, that you should 'come over into Macedonia and help us.' The Spirit of the Lord, I am sure, is among us. We had a very solemn meeting last evening. A number of persons seem deeply anxious for their salvation, and two or three are indulging hope."

This hardened sinner, who for more than fifteen years had been my grief, was now for nearly an equal period my consolation, support and joy in the ministry—"my helper in Christ Jesus." And in his death, which occurred April 8, 1822, at the age of 67, he exhibited that calm resignation and that blessed peace and hope which the Gospel inspires.

READER! mark in the above faithful and unadorned narrative of facts, the display of God's *boundless grace*, and the necessity and reality of the

new birth. Had you seen Vining one year before his conversion, you would have said he was among the most hopeless of men. But "the blood of Jesus Christ," that blood which he long persisted in rejecting, applied through the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, "cleanseth from all sin."

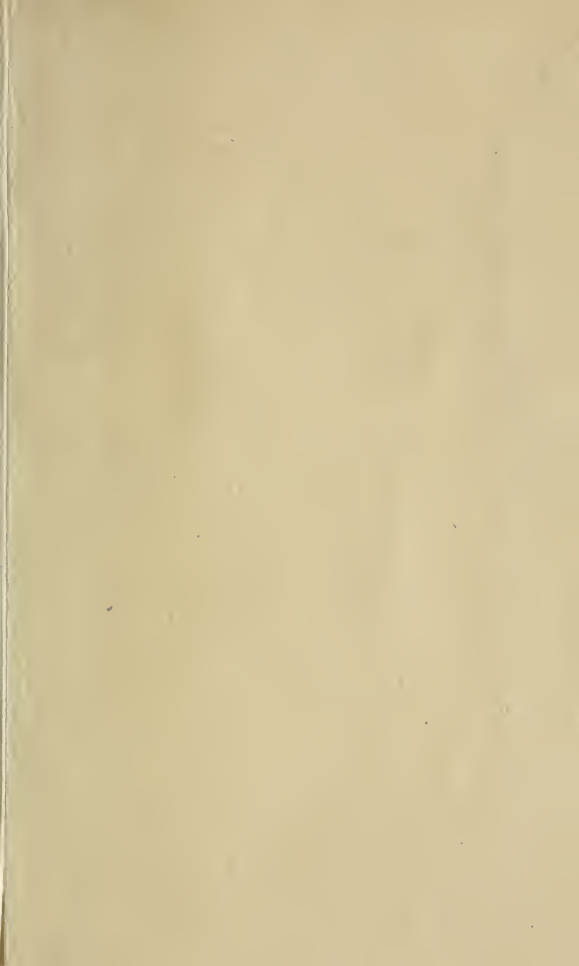
Observe also how God *answers prayer*, and by what a train of distant and apparently unconnected events he can fulfill his merciful designs. Perhaps this Tract has fallen into the hands of a *mother*, who trembles lest she shall train up children for perdition. All we know of Vining's mother is the simple record: "*Just before she breathed her last, she took me in her arms and blessed me, and gave me up to God.*" That MOTHER'S LAST PRAYER reached over an ungodly life of half a century. It was not forgotten of God. He met the wandering, reckless grandson in the wilderness, and through him reached and subdued the hardened heart of the son, grown old in rebellion and prejudice. Give me poverty—chain me in the dungeon—bind me to the martyr's stake, but deny me not *the prayers of a godly mother.*

Is any one so dead to every tender and moving consideration as to DELAY REPENTANCE because Vining at last found mercy? Will you, as he did, provoke God's wrath, and hazard the rejection of Christ, till your sins rise up like mountains between your soul and heaven! Beware! O be-

ware, lest God, who glorified his *grace* in rescuing him, glorify his *justice* in condemning you. Even now you may be "grieving the Holy Spirit." He may be ready to depart, and you "find no place for repentance." One hour's delay is at peril. *Now* God invites you—*now* the bleeding Savior claims your whole heart. Will you thrust him away? Can you deliberately *postpone* a matter of such amazing interest? Remember, that while one hardened sinner of fifty years has found mercy, thousands have perished in iniquity, and perished for ever!

THE END.

2d 31



JAN 31 1971

